

## Sealife needs active help

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The waters around Maui are as important to the visitor industry and residents as the sand beaches. The life in those waters is as important to life on Maui as the benign weather and plentiful sunshine.

The governmental agency in charge of protecting near-shore marine life is the state Department of Land and Natural Resources through a variety of divisions. The DLNR's policies are set by the Legislature, the state administration, and most directly by the Board of Land and Natural Resources. As chairman of the BLNR, Peter Young has been a refreshing change in the basic attitude displayed by the historically ineffective DLNR. Young's high-profile presence helps raise awareness of just how important natural resources are to life in the islands.

Young got personally involved when it appeared commercial activities were overwhelming Ahihi-Kinau Natural Reserve on Maui and last week announced an upcoming series of public meetings around the state to "develop a marine-managed area policy to best protect nearshore and marine ecosystems."

As pointed out by Young in his March 4 Viewpoint in The Maui News, the state's marine ecosystems are being stressed and "the main source of stress is people." More people than ever are fishing and they are using equipment so sophisticated it has turned a one-time art into something anyone with the right gear and inclination can do successfully.

Young says the upcoming effort has the goal of "assuring there are fish for the future."

"To better take care of our marine ecosystems we need to take less out (fish, habitat, etc.) and put less in (pollution, sediments, etc.)," he said.

That's fine but with growing populations, including individuals who think they have a birthright to take as much as they want from the ocean, there will have to be rules that are enforced, just as the kapu system was enforced in pre-contact days. Until the nature cops are able to do the job they should be doing, plans for protecting Hawaii's natural resources are just talk.

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